

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 2, 2018
TEXT: LUKE 21:25-36
THEME: STAYING AWAKE

“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

In the name of Jesus:

Have you ever caught yourself falling asleep behind the wheel of your car when you are driving for any length of time? If you are like me, you will do anything to stay awake behind the wheel. I have tried opening the car windows in the winter so that the cold air hits you in the face so that I can stay awake. I have stopped on gas stations or restaurants to purchase food to eat or drinks to consume to stay awake. One year, my family gave me the gift of satellite radio to listen to when I am away from home driving on the highway. You know the importance of trying to stay awake when you are driving, because if you do not, the outcome can be fatal.

Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks to us this morning on the importance of staying awake. He is speaking about the coming end times, the Day of Judgment, for all people. Jesus tells His disciples and He urges His followers, including you and me to STAY AWAKE, be ready, for the time when we will meet our Maker is fast approaching.

Now concerning that Day, no one knows when that Day will be. No one knows, which is why Jesus warns: “that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.” People

have a tendency, including you and me, to take for granted these words of Jesus. The life that God has given to us to live here on earth is like a long trip, a pilgrimage, if you will, where we live and travel here on earth but eventually our time will end and we will stand before the Lord on the Last Day. There are two ways in which one can live before that Last Day arrives, you can live as if that Day was not ever going to come, or you can live your life in constant and continual preparation for the coming of that Day.

Jesus says: “watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.” You can live your life being so preoccupied and consumed by the pleasures and cares of this life that you totally forget about preparing for that time to come when Jesus will appear in the clouds. It is easy to assume that Jesus’ words here do not apply to any of us. What Christian would even think that their heart would be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life? Isn’t Jesus saying this about those who do not believe in Him? Yes, but it also applies to each and every one of us.

Dissipation is another word for indulging one’s self. You see, it is easy to get so wrapped up in life that you forget about Jesus. When you get so wrapped up in the affair of life that you forget about Jesus, it is tantamount to falling asleep at the wheel. What does falling asleep in following Jesus look like?

It would be like a security guard standing watch during the middle of the night. Nothing is going on, and so he closes his eyes for a bit, thinking that all is well. And yet, at that moment when he falls asleep, the thief enters to cause all sorts of

havoc. Jesus warns us to stay alert, stay awake, for the enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking anyone he can devour. The devil can attack you like a roaring lion, or he can sneak up on you as well, and when he does, all of a sudden, it's too late.

Satan lives to drive us away from Jesus. He wants and will do anything in his power to separate us from Jesus. And so he lulls us to sleep, getting us to think that all is well. When we do that, we let our guard down, and like a lion, he pounces.

How do we and how can we let our guard down? By holding grudges and seeking revenge against those who have hurt us, when we allow bitterness and hatred well up in our hearts and then let it show itself in our lives. When it becomes more important for us to be like everyone else and fit into the crowd, rather than following Jesus.

Jesus says that blessed are those who hear His Word and keep it. And yet God's Word is profaned, neglected and ignored. We fall asleep whenever we separate ourselves from God's word. When we stay away from worship, let our minds wander in worship, neglect the study of God's Word, let the Bible disappear from our lives and let it collect dust on our bookshelf. We fall asleep when we hold the things of this life more important than God and His Word. When we doubt instead of having faith, worry rather than pray, and when we live as if we mattered most and God mattered the least. When others look at how we live our lives, do they see a difference, or are we living like the rest of the world lives? Can others see Jesus living in and through us, or can others really not tell the difference between a Christian life and someone who doesn't follow Jesus? Are you willing to confess

your sins, or is it just as easy to make excuses for your behavior? So just fit in with the crowd, do what everyone else is doing, go along to get along, as they say. No one you know goes to church, so you might as well stay at home as well. You can't take it with you, so you might as well spend your hard earned money the way that you want, on things that make you happy. Rather than give joyfully to the Lord, you will find a reason not to give to the church. Find a reason. Invent one! Instead of getting involved in the ministry of the church, it is just as easy to stay on the sidelines and criticize the work of others.

And whatever you do, stop coming to worship services. Say that it is always too cold in the church, or if it is summer say it is too hot to get out. Create an excuse that works for you, you worked too late, you were up too late watching the football game, Sunday is the only day you get to sleep in, the pastor did something you didn't like. Find the excuse that fits and if that doesn't work, come up with a new one! Because, just like others say who don't go to church, why should I go to church?

Why? Because you don't want to fall spiritually asleep and lose your faith. You know it happens, you have seen it happen in your family, among your closest friends and work associates. They grow lax in their faith and soon Satan robs them of their faith. And it is just as Jesus spoke about: "your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. " So what should you do? Listen to Jesus and heed His Word: "³⁶ But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

What does it look like when you stay awake in the Lord? You remember who you are and whose you are. You remember that you have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If anyone is baptized in Christ that person is a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come! Daily you put on the Lord Jesus Christ, by repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ. You don't neglect worship, as some are in the habit of doing, but you Sunday after Sunday come to Bible study and worship, confessing your sins and then receiving the forgiveness of sins in the worship service and the Lord's Supper. You read the Bible, asking the Spirit to guide and enlighten you. You read, mark learn, and inwardly take to heart the teachings of the Bible. You stay hungry for the Body and Blood of Jesus offered to you in the Lord's Supper. The Supper is food for the souls of sinners. You are a sinner, and Jesus is here for you!

Daily you put into practice what the Apostle Paul talks about: " appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." What does that look like?

You pray for your enemies and do good to those who have wronged you.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything let your requests be made known to God. Pray, praise, and give thanks to God for He is good to you. His love for you never ends. Pray privately, pray with other Christians, and pray without ceasing.

Come to church; invite others to come with you. Share the love of Christ, not just in deeds but in words as well. Speak to others about Jesus. Tell of His love. Be

the salt and light of the world that Jesus has called you to be. Give to the Lord, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Kneel and confess your sins, receiving Christ's forgiveness won for you on the cross. Know that you are not alone in your struggle against sin, Satan, and death.

As Christmas fast approaches, so too does the Day of the Lord. As you make your preparations for the celebration of the Lord Jesus' birth, don't forget to continually prepare for when Jesus comes again in glory. Stay awake. Stay alert. Jesus is coming again, and so we pray the prayer the faithful has always prayed, come Lord Jesus!

Amen